

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 019719

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT KABUL 0539 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
ISLAMABAD LONDON MOSCOW NEW DELHI TEHRAN CINCPAC
KARACHI LAHORE, JANUARY 28TH:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 0539

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AF

SUBJECT: DAOUD GOVERNMENT AFTER SIX MONTHS - AN ASSESSMENT

REF: KABUL 7462; KABUL 8197

SUMMARY: SIX MONTHS AFTER TAKING POWER, DAOUD REGIME SEEMS STILL
LARGELY PREOCCUPIED BY SURVIVAL INSTINCTS AND DRIVE TO CONSOLIDATE
POWER, YET IN NO REAL IMMEDIATE DANGER. MAJOR POLICY AND PROGRAM
DECISIONS HAVE BEEN DELAYED OR PUT ASIDE WHILE SECURITY THREATS
ARE ADDRESSED. ACTION IN MANY MINISTRIES IS TAKEN ON AN AD HOC
BASIS WITHOUT ANY UNIFYING POLICY, ALTHOUGH INCREASINGLY ACTION
IS AT LEAST BEING TAKEN, AS NEW OFFICIALS, FROM MINISTERS ON DOWN,
ARE BECOMING MORE FAMILIAR AND CONFIDENT IN THEIR JOBS. UNCERTAINTY
IS STILL RULE, HOWEVER; AND FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP IS LACKING OR
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ERRATIC IN MOST MINISTRIES. RUMORS CONTINUE TO ABOUND OF MAJOR

IMPENDING PERSONNEL CHANGES AT ALL LEVELS. ONLY A FEW MAJOR NEW LAWS (POLICE CUSTOMS AND LABOR) HAVE BEEN PROMULGATED. ECONOMY HAS STARTED BACK FROM DEPTHS, BUT BUSINESSMEN ARE STILL VERY CAUTIOUS. THERE IS A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE AMONG MANY ABOUT NEW REGIME, AS PEOPLE AWAIT THOSE POLICY DECISIONS WHICH WILL DECIDE WHAT LONG-RUN CHARACTER OF GOVERNMENT WILL BE. RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT ARE BEGINNING TO BE HEARD AS EXPECTATIONS AND PROMISES OF "BETTER LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE" HAVE NOT BEEN FULFILLED AND PRICES CONTINUE TO RISE. POPULAR DISCONTENT, IF IT CAN BE HARNESSSED BY BASIC ELEMENTS OF DISAFFECTION, COULD RISE AGAINST DAOUD REGIME; HOWEVER, POTENTIAL OPPOSITION REMAINS FRAGMENTED AND COWED BY BRUTAL TREATMENT METED OUT TO THOSE ACCUSED OF SUBVERSION IN RECENT MONTHS. RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN HIT FURTHER LOW POINT RECENTLY, BUT GOA OBVIOUSLY REMAINS VERY WARY OF PROVOKING GOP TO POINT OF MILITARY ACTION. NEW SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT HAS CONTINUED TO ARRIVE BUT EXACT QUANTITIES STILL IMPOSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN. US POSITION HERE REMAINS SATISFACTORY, YET DAY-TO-DAY GOA HANDLING OF VARIOUS US PROGRAMS (AID, PC, AND USIS) SOMETIMES CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH HIGH LEVEL ASSURANCES OF GOA DESIRE AND NEED FOR A CONTINUING, EVEN EXPANDING US PRESENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. THREATS TO REGIME

DAOUD REGIME HAS PASSED SIX MONTH MARK INTACT AS FAR AS ITS KEY PERSONNEL ARE CONCERNED AND ON SURFACE IS STILL IN COMPLETE CONTROL. AT SAME TIME, REGIME'S ALMOST COMPLETE PREOCCUPATION WITH SURVIVAL AND CONSOLIDATION OF ITS POWER IS INDICATIVE OF PRECARIOUS POSITION IN WHICH IT SEES ITSELF. IN GOA'S VIEW, MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS OF PAST SIX MONTHS HAVE BEEN TWO ALLEGED COUNTERCOUP ATTEMPTS. ARRESTS CONNECTED WITH THESE ATTEMPTS AT MINIMUM NUMBER IN THE HUNDREDS, ALTHOUGH MANY OF THOSE ARRESTED WERE SOON RELEASED. PRISONERS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO VERY BRUTAL TREATMENT, GRUESOME DETAILS OF WHICH NOW DIFFUSING VIA THEIR FAMILIES INTO PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS. FIVE POLITICAL EXECUTIONS HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, THE FIRST SUCH INSTANCE IN OVER 40 YEARS. IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN NUMBER OF SCATTERED ANTI-REGIME DEMONSTRATIONS IN NORTH AND IN SOUTHERN TRIBAL AREAS, REPORTEDLY SPONSORED BY MULLAHS CALLING REGIME "COMMUNIST." THESE HAVE RESULTED IN MORE ARRESTS, PARTICULARLY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS. COMBINATION OF PLOTTING AMONG EDUCATED AND TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP CLASSES IN CITIES PLUS DISAFFECTION AMONG MULLAHS AND CONSERVATIVE

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TRIBESMEN COULD LEAD TO MORE COUNTERCOUP ATTEMPTS. REGIME'S GRISLY INTERROGATION STYLE FOLLOWED BY DEATH AND PRISON SENTENCES FOR MANY ACCUSED OF PLOTTING AGAINST IT WERE AIMED AS DETERRENT TO CONTINUED PLOTTING. ARRESTS FOR REAL OR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS REPORTEDLY STILL CONTINUE DAILY; AND FAMILIES OF ARRESTED MEN HAVE STRONGLY EXPRESSED THEIR RESENTMENT OF GOVERNMENT ACTION. WHEN ONE ADDS PASHTUN REVENGE TRADITION (FOR DEATHS AND PRISON SENTENCES) TO EQUATION, REGIME'S FEARS OF CONTINUING

OPPOSITION OR OF ASSASSINATION OF CHIEF OF STATE COULD BECOME
SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. NONETHELESS, WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE A
SERIOUS UPHEAVAL AGAINST REGIME IN NEXT THREE TO SIX MONTHS,
BARRING THE UNPREDICTABLE POSSIBILITY OF ASSASSINATION. THERE IS
STILL NO ALTERNATIVE TO DAOUD IN SIGHT, AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE
THAT IN HIS STRUGGLE TO DOMINATE HIS LEF
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